

Approved For Release 2001/03/06 : CIA-RDP86-00244R000200040001-0

Tough bias bill wins Senate committee approval—

The Senate Labor Committee last week approved a bill sponsored by its chairman, Sen. Harrison Williams, Jr. (D-N.J.), giving the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) power to issue cease-and-desist orders where it finds discriminatory practices. The bill would also transfer authority to bring court action in cases involving pattern-of-practice discrimination from the Justice Department to the EEOC.

Highway bundle—

California's highway commission adopted a budget of \$951 million for the fiscal year beginning next July, \$15.6 million above the current year. Of the total, \$635 million is for major construction and improvements. Meanwhile, the state senate and assembly passed a law extending the 5% sales tax to gasoline, adding about 2 cents to the 7-cent-per-gal flat bite and raising about \$160 million a year to be allotted to counties. Those with over 500,000 residents would have to use the money for public transportation; others could use it for any type of transportation.

Another round to Con Ed—

Consolidated Edison Company of New York won another battle in its fight to build a 2-million-kw pumped-storage plant at Storm King Mountain near the Hudson River. The U.S. Court of Appeals upheld a Federal Power Commission decision to grant a license to the utility to build the plant. The Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference, which has fought the plan since 1965, says it will take the case to the Supreme Court, if necessary.

GSA adopts VE—

The General Services Administration adopted value engineering (VE) for planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of all federal buildings. Arthur Sampson, commissioner of the Public Buildings Service, will act as chairman of the newly established VE Council, which will direct the nationwide program.

Plans hit peak for '71—

New plans for construction in October reached their highest monthly total of 1971, averaging \$1.5 billion per week, according to ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD figures. Transportation work and sewage treatment plants set a new high for any month on record. Every type of nonresidential building showed new strength.

Florida road criticism—

The Federal Highway Administration accuses the Florida Department of Transportation of flagrant violations of highway specifications because of too few or poorly trained inspectors. Inspection of 12 federal-aid projects found improper records, discarding of test results rather than the material itself and nonuniform concrete, among other deficiencies.

Greater antinnoise power—

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration set up a joint office last week to develop a national program to attack noise problems of existing and planned transportation systems. It is actually an expansion of DOT's office of noise abatement.

October 28, 1971 Vol. 187 No. 18 Number of copies printed this week: 116,064

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